

Gardening

NEWSLETTER

CITY OF SAN RAMON COMMUNITY GARDENS

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**Please be our eyes and ears
and advise us of any immediate
problems.**

To reach Public Services after hours to report an emergency or need for immediate repair, such as a broken water line, please call police dispatch, (925) 973-2779, and they will contact our standby staff

VOLUNTEER GARDENING OPPORTUNITIES

CROW CANYON DEMONSTRATION GARDENS

Tuesdays ♦ 9:00am – 11:00am ♦ 105 Park Place

Join our Public Services team and help maintain the organic demonstration gardens at Crow Canyon Gardens City Park. Enjoy lots of fresh air and exercise as you accomplish tasks that may include composting bins and maintenance, planting, weed pulling/hoeing, hand pruning/trimming, removing spent plants, raking pathways, adding compost or mulch, watering, dividing perennials. Meet by the greenhouse gate. Please wear work clothes, closed toed shoes, sun protection and bring work gloves and a water bottle. For more information about this program and to sign-up, please contact Bonnie Mertz at bmertz@sanramon.ca.gov or, (925) 973-2608. Volunteers must be 16+ years or older and registered with our City Lights Volunteer Program. If you are not currently registered, please visit our website at www.citylights.volunteerhub.com for an application.



VOLUNTEER LANDSCAPE ASSISTANTS

Wednesdays ♦ 9:00am – 11:00am

Forest Home Farms Historic Park, 19953 San Ramon Valley Blvd.

In the shade of the historic buildings and majestic oaks, cedars and redwood trees join the Parks Department maintenance staff with maintenance activities that enhance this 16 acre National Historic Site and City Park. Activities may include planting, pruning, watering, leaf clean-up, irrigation installation, painting and fence repair, weeding, plant propagation, and creek restoration. Volunteers must be age 16+ to participate. Please wear work clothes, closed toed shoes, sun protection and bring work gloves and a water bottle. This is a drop in program, registration is not required. If you have questions, please contact Sharon Peterson at (925) 973-3284 or email speterson@sanramon.ca.gov.

PARKS MAKE LIFE BETTER ♦ CLEAN-UP DAYS

Saturday, April 27, 9am – 12noon ♦ Forest Home Farms Historic Park, 19953 San Ramon Valley Blvd.

Saturday, June 1, 9am – 12noon ♦ Crow Canyon Gardens, 105 Park Place

The City of San Ramon is home to 54 beautiful parks that San Ramon residents are proud of, and that thousands of people enjoy each week. Join our professional park maintenance staff for a cleanup event to assist the City in maintaining neighborhood parks. Tasks may include planting, pruning, applying mulch, replacing sand box materials, painting and general cleanup. The events are open to all ages however children under 13 must be accompanied by an adult. Volunteers are asked to wear work clothes, closed toed shoes, sun protection and bring work gloves and water bottle. Please register in advance on line at www.citylights.volunteerhub.com or contact Bonnie Mertz at bmertz@sanramon.ca.gov or (925) 973-2608

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

SAN RAMON LIBRARY'S UPCOMING CONTRA COSTA MASTER GARDENERS LECTURE SERIES

San Ramon Library located at 100 Montgomery Street
For more information contact Kathy Gilcrest @ (925) 973-2850

Thursday, May 2 2013 ♦ 6:30pm – 8:00pm

What Went Wrong in Your Vegetable Garden Last Year and How to Fix It

Contra Costa Master Gardener Terry Lippert is expert at growing fruits and vegetables in challenging spaces. She will review common problems encountered in growing winter and spring vegetables and how to solve them. She will also discuss various plant disorders such as stunting, forking, and blossom end rot, as well as the timing of planting and irrigation practices for success. Audience participation is encouraged.



CENTRAL CONTRA COSTA SOLID WASTE AUTHORITY HOME COMPOSTING FOR BUSY PEOPLE WORKSHOPS:

Sloat Gardens, 828 Diablo Road, Danville

Composting & Vermicompost

April 21, 2013 ♦ 12:00 – 1:30pm

Contra Costa Times Garden, 2640 Shadelands Drive,
Walnut Creek

Composting & Vermicompost

May 22, 2013 ♦ 10:00 – 11:30am

Visit www.wastediversion.org or call (925) 906-1801 x 306 to reserve your spot for these workshops or to find out about other workshops offered in 2013

UPCOMING NORTH & SOUTH GARDEN MEETING

Thursday, August 15, 2013 ♦ 6:00pm

North Gardens @ Crow Canyon Gardens, 105 Park Place

Please plan on attending. Meeting will be held outdoors. There are some picnic tables to sit on, but feel free to bring your own chair.

Spring Gardening Tip from the American Horticultural Society:

GROWING ANNUALS FROM SEED

Growing annuals like zinnias, marigolds, and tomatoes from seed is easy and economical. The exact time to start seeds varies with the plant and with your location. In general, it's about six weeks before the date of the average last frost in your area. Seed catalogs and packages usually list the number of weeks needed when starting seeds indoors.



Use a potting mix specially formulated to start seeds; you can find such mixes at almost any garden center or hardware store. The mixes are sterile, provide the drainage that seedlings need, and are sometimes enriched with fertilizer. Fill peat pots or other seed-starting containers with the mix and thoroughly moisten it. Then sow your seeds of choice following the directions on the packet.



Place the containers on a tray in a very sunny window or under a grow light. Never allow them to dry out. As soon as the seedlings develop four leaves, use scissors to thin out your seedlings, leaving just the healthiest looking ones.

After all danger of frost has passed, place the trays of seedlings outdoors in a sheltered place for several days, gradually lengthening the time they are exposed to the sun and wind to prevent scorching the leaves, before transplanting them into the garden

NEED YOUR HELP!

Would you like to share a gardening tip with your fellow community gardeners?

Have you been successful with a certain method of eliminating pests or favor a particular organic method? You may be able to help others reap beautiful, healthy crops by sharing your experiences, tips, methods or ideas through the next newsletter or with a presentation at our next garden meeting. Would you like to be the Gardener highlighted in the next newsletter? If so, please contact Louise Weber at lweber@sanramon.ca.gov, or (925) 973-3255.

SPRING “TO-DO” LIST: SPRING GARDEN MAINTENANCE

Reprinted from www.helpfulgardener.com

Every season brings a different set of chores in the garden.
Here is a helpful list of chores that should be tended to in the spring.

- **Pruning** – For early blooming shrubs such as forsythia and viburnum, prune them as soon as blooms have passed. Early spring is also an ideal time to prune your roses.
- **Deadheading** – Remove spent flowers from bulbs, but leave the rest of the plant as is for the time being.
- **Weeding** – Pull weeds from your beds and borders before they have a chance to take hold and spread.
- **Composting** – Tend to your compost if it has been neglected over the winter. If you do not have a compost bin, spring is a great time to start one.
- **Tools** – Spring is a good time to prepare your tools for the upcoming gardening season and to make any necessary repairs or new purchases. You will be happy you have done so when summer sets in.
- **Plant** – Spring is a great time to add new plants to your garden. Be sure, however, that all threat of frost has past. Plant such things as trees, shrubs, hardy annuals, and summer blooming bulbs.
- **Fertilize & Mulch** – Fertilize and mulch beds and borders. Spring is also a good time to fertilize fruit trees. If you applied heavy winter mulch for protection from the cold, you will need to clear it away.
- **Staking** – Stake plants that may be prone to wind damage during the unpredictable spring weather.
- **Lawn Care** – Spring is the best time to start a new lawn from seed. For established lawns, you should start mowing in the spring, but don't initially cut the grass very short for the first few times.

Of course, whether you start these chores in early, mid, or late spring depends on the climate where you live, taking into account such factors as when the threat of frost has past or when the ground is thawed enough to dig. Hopefully these tips will give you a good idea as to where to focus your attention in your garden this spring. Enjoy!

SPRING GARDENING: 8 Unusual Planting Tips You Can't Miss

Reprinted from www.huffingtonpost.com

1. **Cucumbers are sweeter when planted near sunflowers** – It may seem like an odd pairing, but sunflowers make great growing companions when it comes to planting sweeter cucumbers. Not only do both plants require similar soil conditions, the tall stalks of the sunflowers give cucumber plants something supportive to climb.
2. **Use egg shells as fertilizer** – Rich in calcium carbonate, dried egg shells work as a great natural fertilizer. Try crushing them up in a blender before throwing them in your garden to enrich the soil.
3. **Water plants with Chamomile Tea** – Chamomile tea is great for keeping your plants healthy. Use it when watering to ward off bacterial and fungal infections and to prevent young seedlings from damping off. Just make sure the tea is completely cooled off first before you use it.
4. **Plant in odd numbers** – To make your garden look more balanced and pleasing to the eye, be sure to plant in odd numbers. This composition looks more natural than even numbered groupings and gives off the illusion that plants are bigger and healthier.
5. **Plant crocuses near lavender** – Protect your crocuses by planting lavender nearby. Birds are more attracted to the fragrant flower, and it will prevent them from pecking away at your blooming bulbs.
6. **Garden by moonlight** – Night owls, rejoice! Experts say that planting by the light of the moon actually causes gardens to grow faster and stronger than they do if you plant by day. An added bonus? Moonlight gardening also minimizes water waste.
7. **Consider plant placement** – Keep your shorter plants on the south side of your vegetable garden and tall plants toward the north. This will prevent taller plants from casting unwanted shadows over smaller crops, shading them from the sun.
8. **Use cooking water for plants** – The water you use to cook pasta or boil vegetables is full of left over vitamins and nutrients. Instead of throwing it away, let it cool to room temperature and then use it to water your plants. You'll be left with a happier, greener garden.

BOKASHI COMPOSTING

Here in the West, Bokashi refers to both a composting system and to the fermented bran, rice or hay that makes it possible. According to Wikipedia, the Bokashi is a Japanese word that means “fermented organic matter.” Like vermicomposting, the Bokashi system is usually a small-scale operation that can be carried out indoors. But while vermicomposting is aerobic, Bokashi is an anaerobic process that relies on the inoculated bran to ferment organic material in a tightly closed container.



In Bokashi composting, kitchen scraps of all kinds – including meat and dairy products banned from aerobic systems – are mixed with some of the inoculated bran, pressed

into the Bokashi bucket, covered with another handful of bran, and tightly covered. When the bucket is full, it is sealed shut and set aside for ten to twelve days. Every other day during that time, the leachate that is an inevitable by-product of anaerobic composting needs to be drawn off. That’s the only care required. (This is very easy with a commercial Bokashi Composter which has a spigot for this purpose.) When the bucket is opened, the contents, though recognizable, are thoroughly pickled. At this stage, the “pre-compost” as one company brochure terms it can be buried in a fallow spot in the garden. One Caution: It is still so acidic that plant roots should not come in contact with it for two to four weeks.

This brief overview of the Bokashi composting process does little to explain how it works. If you would like more information on this composting method, go to www.ComposterConnection.com

Welcome to all the new gardeners for 2013!!!

Here are some policy and common courtesy reminders while gardening at the North or South gardens:

- Please keep the pathway around your allotment weeded (North & South Gardens) and covered with chips (North Garden only) to discourage weeds from returning.
- Please do not use treated wood for anything in your allotment. Chemicals from the wood can be leached into the soil.
- Please remember that both the North & South Gardens are Organic Garden – please refer to the Community Garden Policies – entry #1 under Gardening Method Policies.
- Please only use organic fertilizer – Miracle grow is not organic.
- North Garden - Please share the manure with your fellow north gardeners – do not store manure in your allotment!
- As a courtesy to other gardeners, please coil hoses back up when you are done with them.
- Please coil the hose next to the spigot – not around the spigot. This makes it easier for the next gardener to stretch the hose to the location they desire.
- Please do not put dirt in the green waste can. For the North Garden – if you fill the green waste can, please move the can to the curb to the right of the entrance (as you’re coming in) to the parking lot. Pickup is Tuesday.
- North Garden – there are 2 controls on most water spigots – one is for the amount of flow and the other is for on/off. The one for the amount of flow is often turned all the way on which increases the leaking and turns the flow into power washing. If you turn it up, please turn it back down for the next gardener.
- North Garden – Over by the garden shed there will be a designated area where unused and available building material can be placed. Any gardener may use what they need. So that this area doesn’t become a permanent pile that begins to look like junk, items left for more than three months we will be disposed.

THE BEST WAY TO REACH THE MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT

The best way to reach our maintenance staff with your requests or questions is to go to www.sanramon.ca.gov and click on “contact us.” Fill in your information where indicated; problem, topic, description, and your contact information. Then press “send,” and your correspondence is on its way to our maintenance department. Any citizen can

request maintenance, repairs, or advise us of a problem. All requests are reviewed and monitored daily and cannot be lost in the system. Each is automatically assigned to the staff responsible for that particular topic. Each of your questions, requests or issues will receive a response from one of our maintenance staff.